

THE CLASS OF '83.

BY JESSIE F. O'DONNELL.



HE meeting will please come to order," said Esther Morgan, bringing her gavel down forcibly on the table amid the chattering of her classmates.

"Hurry, girls!" cried Sadie Browne. "Queen Esther is getting cross."

The girls became quiet, and the officers took their places. Kitty Kline, the secretary, climbed to a high stool by the desk at which she presided, looking much like a demure kitten, and Anna Fairchild hurried to the treasurer's corner and grasped the insignia of her office, a toy bank in which the funds of the class were deposited, together with a much-used screw-driver, by means of which they were liberated.

Esther untied the ribbon stretched across the president's chair to guard it from profane intrusion, and, seating herself, said sadly: "This is our very last class-meeting, girls. Next week we graduate!"

"We ought to have celebrated the occasion by a 'spread,'" exclaimed Sadie. "Why didn't we think? Oh, I sigh for Briggs's and Colham's fried oysters, and D'Arblee's delicious ices!"

Sadie was interrupted by groans and hisses from the girls. But Esther frowned on such levity, and inquired with dignity: "Has the occasion no solemnity for you, girls—no sadness?"

"Plenty," responded irrepressible Sadie. "We're always solemn when there's nothing in the larder," indicating, by a wave of her hand, a cupboard where the girls had kept their "goodies."

"You are getting too old to talk such nonsense, Sadie," said dignified Esther. "You must remember that you graduate next week, and become a woman."

"Sufficient to the day is the evil thereof," replied Sadie, saucily. "I hate to leave the 'Sem' and the girls as much as you do, Esther. But how glorious to be free! Let's not think of the good-byes. Let's talk about the happy days we mean to have."

"Rather about what we mean to make of ourselves," and Miriam Stacy's brown eyes smiled gravely.

"There speaks our earnest Miriam," said Anna Fairchild. "And she is right, girls. We are almost women now, and must think of something besides pleasure. I wish you'd all agree to a thing I've been thinking about and mean to try."

"Oh! one of Anna's startling schemes for revolutionizing the world!" groaned Sadie. "Any more five-mile walks before breakfast, Anna?" referring to a proceeding into which Anna had once beguiled the class.

"I hope it isn't anything dreadfully strong-minded," sighed Cora Dayton, a pale pretty girl of eighteen. "You remember you took us all to a woman-suffrage meeting once."

"And, worst of all," exclaimed Kitty Kline, shaking her dainty fist, "she organized an anti-confectionery society, and tried to have us substitute fruit for D'Arblee's bon-bons."

"You would never do anything original if I didn't stir you up, girls," pleaded Anna, in self-defense, after the laughter over Kitty's accusation had subsided.

"I am afraid that is true," admitted Esther Morgan, reluctantly. "Anna has been a real inspiration to us. How many good things she has helped us to! We should never have formed that reading-circle outside of our school-work, which we have enjoyed so much, if it had not been for Anna. And she has been the prime mover in our botanizing and field-parties."

"Yes, and she persuaded me to loosen my corsets, and Sadie to give up her coffee. We never have those terrible headaches now, though Sadie shivers over her cold water in the morning, and I look like Mrs. Dr. Stubbs—and you all know how distressingly stout she is." And Kitty put her two little hands on her pretty rounded waist, and tried in vain to clasp them about it.

"What is your new plan, dear?" asked thoughtful Miriam.

"Just this: you have all heard me say that every girl should learn some lucrative work or trade by which she could become self-supporting if circumstances obliged. I think a woman

should know how to keep accounts and something about business quite as much as a man. For my part, I am not content to have men arrogate to themselves everything in the world that is really worth knowing."

"For goodness sake!" exclaimed Sadie. "What do you want us to do? Learn to be porters and coal-diggers, or cooks and chambermaids and seamstresses, and sit in the intelligence-offices, waiting for positions?"

"How absurd you are, Sadie!" Anna replied, somewhat offended. "I only want each '83 to promise that, before our reunion in 1885, she will earn a certain sum of money by her own efforts. It isn't so much the money that I care about; it is the knowledge and training we will get."

Anna looked anxiously about, to watch the effect of her words.

Blank amazement was pictured on Cora Dayton's face. Cora was a blonde, with hair of the lightest straw-color, lips of the faintest pink, transparent skin, through which the veins gleamed softly, and eyes of a pale placid blue.

New ideas startled Cora. She had never possessed any but second-hand ones. When at home, she was content to be dependent on father and brother. Her classmates and teachers did Cora's thinking at Merlingtown Seminary. She was ever ready to follow another's lead. A good-natured placidity was her distinguishing trait.

Kitty Kline opened her bright eyes and rosy mouth to their furthest extent, and nearly slipped off her stool in mingled curiosity and mirth.

Queen Esther was perplexed and dubious and somewhat haughty.

Anna Fairchild's troubled gaze met Miriam Stacy's, as it flashed her a glance of undisguised approval, and a softly uttered "Bravo, Anna!" broke the silence.

Then Sadie Browne exclaimed, her eyes dancing with fun: "What a dear old crank you are, Anna!"

"You consider anyone who doesn't think just as you do is a crank, Sadie," retorted Anna, quickly.

"Anna is not a crank, but a reformer," said Miriam, the peacemaker.

"Not that, either. I'm only progressive."

"But, Anna, you surely don't mean we are to work—just like common persons?" and Queen Esther's lip curled scornfully.

A hot flush stained Miriam Stacy's olive cheek, but she said bravely: "If Anna did mean that, Esther, I fail to see anything degrading or dishonorable in honest work."

It was well understood by the girls that Miriam's parents were not wealthy, and were fitting their daughter for a teacher. Regretting her hasty speech, Esther rejoined, with a certain rare graciousness of manner that had won for her the title of "Queen": "Forgive me, Miriam. I did not mean intellectual labor, like that of an artist or teacher; but, as Sadie says, 'to haunt intelligence-offices, waiting for a position.'"

"And mix with those horrid woman's-rights women, who wear divided skirts and short hair and want to vote!" exclaimed Cora, whose ideas of business, hygiene, and politics were vague.

"And not have time or freedom for travel or fun?" queried Sadie. "When we've been wearing ourselves to shadows over lessons and rules and regulations all these years!"

"No dress—no parties—no flirtations—no lovers!" Kitty's sweet childish face was very doleful, as she summed up the woes that would result from the adoption of Anna's plan.

"I don't mean that you shall work all the time, or dreadfully hard—of course not. I simply suggest that we pledge ourselves in this way, so we may learn business habits and methods. Suppose we each try to earn one hundred dollars."

"That isn't very much," said Kitty Kline, thinking of the rapidity with which that sum had often melted away before the temptations of confectioners and jewelers and dry-goods establishments. For Kitty loved pretty things, and a wealthy uncle, whose adopted child she was, supplied her with unlimited pocket-money.

"Little to spend, but a great deal to earn," remarked the president, wisely. "Did you ever earn a dollar in your life, Kitty dear?"

"Not a cent!" was the woe-begone response.

"Poor little Miss Absurdity!" laughed Sadie, "How will she ever learn business habits and methods?" imitating Anna's dictatorial tone to the life.

The class of '83 had not pored over Dr. Hopkins's outline study of man for nothing. No, indeed! Did they not all remember his definition of an absurdity, as something "opposed to a mathematical demonstration"? And what could that mean, but Kitty Kline? During her school life, she had been uniformly and absolutely opposed to mathematical demonstration, from cash accounts to astronomy. Even those enchanting problems in trigonometry, which one could work on for days without coming in sight of a solution, had failed to win her admiration. Hence her name.

"How can we earn a hundred dollars, Anna?"

Sadie inquired, gravely. "It will be easy enough for you and Miriam—she will teach, and you can do anything; but Kitty and I—beg pardon, Kitty—are so stupid."

"Kitty is musical, and you draw and paint beautifully, Sadie; and I can't do either," Anna suggested. "Why not turn your talents to account?"

"Perhaps some of you will earn it at one grand effort," suggested Miriam. "But you won't have the experience and growth we will have, who must drudge for it."

Anna Fairchild was the daughter of a self-made man, who had instilled into her many of his own progressive ideas. She had been the leading spirit in the class of '83, and was ever on the alert for something new. Anna was tall and angular, with dark curls, which clustered over her head as profusely as ideas gathered within it. The keen brown eyes were clear and critical, but could grow wonderfully tender. Quick to observe, thoroughly truthful, she was inclined to be a little impatient with dullness or timidity or unfairness.

Anna was used to having her plans ridiculed and condemned; but, as she usually carried her point, she felt confident of success now. The girls were sure to yield in the end. After much discussion and persuasion, they agreed to the plan, though all but Miriam and Anna declared they had no idea how the money was to be earned.

It was decided to keep the agreement secret from friends and relatives, and that none of the girls should speak of their experiences to each other, should they meet or write before the two years passed.

And so the meeting adjourned. "It is not so much the pain of the parting," says Bulwer, "as the how and where we are to meet again the face about to vanish from our view."

Two years later, six young women met in the 'senior' room of Merlingtown Seminary. Time had developed and beautified each one, but a strange constraint held them speechless. Esther Morgan broke the silence: "Will you open the experience meeting, Miriam dear? Tell us what you have done with the two years."

Miriam Stacy leaned her graceful head, which sat on the slender neck like a white lily on its stem, against one strong slender hand as she said:

"I can tell little that you do not know. After I graduated, I spent the summer at home, studying hard, for the most part, the work I was to begin in the autumn. I applied for a vacancy in the Tylerville Ladies' Seminary, and was

fortunate enough to be accepted. I have taught in the seminary two years; have had classes in algebra, rhetoric, English literature and history, American history, and botany, and have met with fair success. My salary has been \$375 yearly, so I have earned more than the sum required. I love my work and my pupils, and have tried to be to them a friend as well as a teacher."

"We all know what a friend you can be!" cried Sadie, gratefully.

"You don't say what a dear, brave, patient girl you have been; but we can guess," added Esther.

"Ah! a teacher's work calls for patience," returned Miriam. "Sometimes, I have grown so discouraged. It is a fearful responsibility, this training young minds in lessons of honor and womanhood."

"Cora, let's have your story." And Queen Esther flashed a sudden sweet smile at the girl who sat so quiet in her arm-chair.

All felt a subtle change in Cora Dayton. She was more independent, more self-sustained, than of old, and her classmates turned to her with interest.

The quick tears sprang to Cora's blue eyes as she began in a low voice: "I wrote to you, girls, of my father's death a few months after our graduation, but I did not tell you that he left brother Charlie and me poor.

"It was a strange experience," Cora continued, smiling sadly at the girls' expressions of sympathy. "Where I had had a hundred dollars for the asking before, I did not have one hundred cents now. Charlie is older than I, and different; brave and proud and independent, and he at once went to work settling up papa's affairs. Charlie sold the house, the furniture, and the horses—everything—and paid all papa's debts. We had only a few hundred dollars left, and went to live in a horrid little boarding-house. I did nothing but cry all the time, and, when I found people snubbing me, and the girls I had been intimate with engaged when I called, I begged Charlie to take me away from Rochester. We went to Philadelphia. Charlie got a position as book-keeper, and worked so hard! I did nothing but cry, and think of papa and the good things we used to have. Poor Charlie, he was always so patient.

"One day, I came across Anna's picture, and remembered our agreement. But I said: 'Of course, I can't do anything now.' I thought I should earn the money from papa in some way. Then I recollected how, when Anna proposed it,

I thought it so silly for girls with rich fathers to try and earn money, and that work was only for the poor. 'Surely, I am poor enough!' I said. Then I thought what wonderful things I could do with a hundred dollars. Afterward it came to me how selfish I had been, and I determined to turn over a new leaf.

"It was hard work. First, I got out my pretty pictures and 'bric-a-brac' that I had kept stored away, and made our rooms more home-like. Charlie was so pleased, and then I told him I was going to be a better girl. I didn't tell him of our agreement, but I began to plan about earning money. I thought of so many things, but I could do none of them.

"So I painted some little cards and holly-wood articles and tried to sell them; but no one would buy them, and I grew so discouraged! One day, I was in the rooms of the Woman's Exchange, and overheard a lady who was anxious to get some lace-work done. The saleswoman said they were so hurried it was impossible.

"You remember, girls, the only thing I ever knew much about was fancy-work. So I plucked up courage, and told her I could do it. She wanted to see some of my efforts. The next day, I took some pieces to her, with which she was delighted. I made her a handkerchief, and she paid me five dollars. Since then, I have had work from her and the Woman's Exchange, in which she is interested. I have done all kinds of needle-work in lace, worsted, and silk embroidery, also etching and painting, so I got my earnings up to a hundred dollars three weeks ago. I can't originate designs, but I can copy anything.

"And oh, girls, I have been so much happier! It has been so nice to help Charlie, and so good to have something to think of besides our misfortunes." And Cora, who had never talked for so long a time in her life before, without someone from whom to take the cue, paused for breath.

The girls had listened with wet eyes to their friend's story.

"You're a trump, Cora—a regular heroine!" said Anna, warmly.

Miriam Stacy kissed her softly, murmuring: "Brave little girl!"

"You have done wonders, Cora," said Esther. "But why didn't you let us know? We might have helped you, and would have been so glad to do it."

"I did want to write you at first," said Cora, "but Charlie wouldn't let me. He said it would be begging for sympathy."

"You're just splendid!" exclaimed Sadie. "I always envied you the power to make the lovely things you used to at school."

"And oh, Cora! I want lots of beautiful fancy-work for my house, and laces and embroideries for my 'trousseau,' and you shall do them!" cried Kitty Kline, betraying the secret she had been trying so hard to keep till it came her turn to speak.

"Why, Kitty Kline! are you going to be married?" cried the girls. "Tell us at once what that beautiful ring on your finger means!"

Kitty laughed, blushed, dimpled, and was more bewitching than of old.

"Well, girls," she said, with a pretty little air of importance, "I just went in for fun, after I left school! Such delightful balls and Germans and dinners as I enjoyed! Such gay times at Saratoga and Newport and Lake George! I thought of my promise occasionally, but did nothing about it till last summer. My mother's sister lives in a queer little country-place, and she wished me so much to visit her, that I consented. I thought nothing would induce me to stay there more than a week or so.

"You know I can sing," continued Kitty, who had a voice like a lark's. "And I actually got ten scholars in vocal culture, and became so interested in them—and in Walter, who was spending the summer there—that I was at aunty's until autumn, and went home engaged.

"I think I learned the value of money, earning it myself—I may not earn any more, but I'm going to help Walter save it. I can trust him completely. He's just grand, girls! We are to be married in October, and I'm so happy!" concluded Kitty, incoherently.

After Kitty had been kissed and congratulated, Anna Fairchild was called on to speak:

"I began busying myself about different things as soon as I went home," she said. "My work was not planned, like Miriam's, but I had more resources than the rest of you. My father publishes three different newspapers, and I learned to set type in his office some years ago. After I graduated, I went into his office again; setting type, reading proof, or writing locals and editorials, and my father paid me a small salary. I had always a mania for scribbling, so I used to write little stories and send them to different periodicals, that invariably sent them back. I grew discouraged and blue, for I longed to be recognized as a writer; but I kept at it. About six months ago, my first story was accepted. Since then, I have had several published, and have been paid for them. The tide is beginning to turn, and I shall keep on till my success is sure.

"My oddest experience was in the Western city where I went to visit my brother. At first, I did nothing besides drive and visit; but I did not like the place nor the people over-much. I liked the life and energy and activity I saw; but, having no part in it, I felt like a butterfly in a bee-hive. Then I began to work, and found the city enchanting. While I was only a useless idler, it is not strange that discontent crept into my heart. One morning, I saw an advertisement in the paper:

"WANTED: A young lady compositor. Call at No. 50, Burton Block."

"I put on my wraps and went down. I found the room, opened the door, after several unanswered knocks, and stepped into a crowd of men and the usual accompanying cloud of tobacco-smoke. You can't think how crude and embarrassed I felt! A tall blonde young man stepped forward, in answer to my inquiry for the editor. I faltered out my errand, and was told that his brother had charge of the business department, and would not be in before two o'clock. So I left my name, and, promising to call again, thankfully closed the door on all those curious staring men, inwardly vowing never to enter the office again.

"But, when afternoon came, my courage rose; once more I sought 'No. 50, Burton Block.' Much to my relief, I found only two persons present; one, the editor, whom I had met in the morning. He introduced me to his brother. After a few inquiries in regard to my experience and qualifications, he informed me that I could begin work. I had hardly expected to be snapped up so quickly.

"When I told my friends what I had done, I brought a storm of inquiry and reproach on my unlucky head. But none of them hit on the secret wherein lay the charm of the work: that it took me out of myself and my own petty annoyances and heartaches, and gave me something to think of—an object!

"The paper on which I worked had just been started by the three Judson brothers, and it has prospered. I worked for them nine or ten weeks, and then left because warm weather had come, and I wanted leisure for excursions. And I was going home in June.

"I think I learned self-control there, as well as some other things. My employers and associates were thoughtful and courteous, but I necessarily found my position very different from that which I had held in my father's office. Looking back now, I think I may have been somewhat exacting. I missed certain little attentions to which I had been accustomed, but

was otherwise treated in a perfectly gentleman-like way." Anna stopped abruptly, and then added: "Now, Esther, do call on Sadie."

"I didn't suppose you had half finished," cried Sadie, regretfully. "My story sounds very prosaic after the thrilling ones I have heard. I worried a good deal at first, for I felt sure I should be the only one to fail to win the hundred dollars. The village where we live is small, and had no greenhouse. I persuaded papa to fit up a small one, and I took charge of it. It has been a success. I have had a boy of fifteen to do heavy work, but I have taken charge of the flowers, potting and planting and trimming, myself, besides making up orders. We have frequent parties and entertainments in Snowdon where flowers are wanted, and the townspeople have been glad to be able to get them near at hand.

"It has been successful, financially. It has almost paid already its first cost, besides expenses. I have liked the work, and have been very happy with my flowers.

"Socially, too, it has been useful, for the young people often congregate in my greenhouse and gardens, and patronize them liberally, besides enlivening me."

Esther's voice faltered slightly as she began: "I went into society at once after I graduated," she said. "Mother and I live by ourselves, and she had not been out much since father's death till I came home. We had many friends—oh! I was so happy, girls, for the first eight months. But then I began to lose my interest in those pleasures. Everything seemed empty and dull, and I grew restless and discontented."

"Why, Esther?" asked Kitty, in surprise.

"Never mind why, Kitty," Esther answered, gravely. "I was listless and miserable, and so I looked about me for something to do.

"You know my grandfather left me a large property. I felt that I ought to be competent to manage my own business-affairs and money-matters. Judge Gray, my lawyer, is a warm friend of mother's and mine, and I persuaded him to let me read law under his direction. I have been doing that for more than a year, and meanwhile have done copying and other work for him so as to earn my hundred dollars. I have been more content than before, and have gained a knowledge of business, law, and finance that I should be loth to resign."

"If that isn't just like you!" cried Sadie. "Hurrah for 'Queen Esther,' the lawyer of '83!"

And so the girls told their stories, but not one made full confession.

Miriam Stacy did not speak of the many

hours when heart and brain were alike weary—when, crushed by the burden of home and school, she had longed to cast them all aside, and her life with them. She did not tell the girls how she had made herself one with her pupils, identifying herself with their interests, or what an inspiration her own beautiful life had been.

Kitty, rapt in her new love, had forgotten her countless flirtations and the many men she had found interesting before the true knight came.

Cora did not tell how bravely she had fought against discontent and her own fatal weakness. Nor did Sadie relate her struggles with bugs and worms and plumbers, or speak of certain love-episodes among the flowers.

What hint did Anna Fairchild give these classmates of the doubts that had made the years a struggle? What did Miriam Stacy, whose child-like faith was as natural as her breath, know of the suffering of a soul like Anna's?

How little did Kitty Kline, blessedly content with Walter Haven's love, know of the passion of envy in Esther Morgan's breast? No one noticed the tense lines about the proud lips. No one saw the slender hand pressed to Esther's heart, as though it would crush down its pain. No one knew how the weary girl was longing for the lover far away. Hers was the old story of two proud spirits; of exactions and jealousies, of quarrels and misunderstandings, till matters came to open rupture, and Esther bade him go,

and learned too late—as we learn so many things—that the brightness of her young life went with him.

The girls had agreed to finish the day with a little dinner at the Raymond House. Here they talked over past and future more at length.

"Will you give up the work, now the money is earned?" asked Anna.

"No, indeed!" replied Sadie, voicing the sentiment of all. "If we drop one work, we'll take up another. 'To be idle is to be miserable,' and heaven bless Anna for teaching us so!" And Sadie rose and proposed Anna's health.

Several other impromptu toasts followed, and then Miriam, in a few graceful words, called upon Anna to respond to "working women." It was a theme on which Anna was ever enthusiastic.

"Working women!" she cried, "the bet-noir of fashionable nonentities! All honor to them! Their lives are more earnest than those of women of leisure; and, therefore, their influence is more powerful.

"Work makes women stronger, happier, more helpful. Work tends to self-development. From working women spring reforms in society, education, and morality—here's long life and larger opportunity to working women:

'Get leave to work

In this world—'tis the best you get at all,'

'Get work; get work:

Be sure 'tis better than what you work to get.'"



THE FUTURE, TOO, IS BRIGHT.

BY KATE AULD VOORHEES.

Oh, tell me not of bygone hours,
Of days no more I'll see—
Which, though they never can return,
Are dearer far to me
Than future years that hope will tint
With e'en delusive light.
Though dearly do I love the past,
The future too is bright.

My heart leaps forth to meet the years,
The years that are to come;
And they will bring full many a joy
To this, my happy home.
Those bygone hours can ne'er return—
To wish them, is it right?
No: though the olden days were glad,
The future too is bright.

“BEYOND THESE VOICES.”

BY LUCY H. HOOPER.

CONCLUDED FROM PAGE 346.

CHAPTER IV.

THE DIARY OF LOUISE ARMYTAGE.

April 10th, 1874.



ANY times I have thought that I would keep a diary, and, as this is my nineteenth birthday, and I am done forever with classes and governesses, I fancy this is a good moment at which to begin. And first I must say something about my past life. I have had a more eventful existence than usually falls to the lot of girls of my age, and then I have such a good and kind father. I do not think that there are many fathers and daughters that are devoted to each other to the extent that we are. When people pity me for having no brothers or sisters, I can always say to them: But there is papa; and, indeed, I have never felt the want of any other companionship. He has always been such a companion for me, and has helped me in my studies, and looked after my amusements, and chosen my dresses for me, and, best of all, he has made me his friend and constant associate, just as though he were the mother that I lost when I was a baby.

But there is something else that has struck me of late years as being very strange—a something that I cannot define, much less describe, except in the words of a little French poem that I read the other day:

“I feel

A love unknown that hovers round my path,
Sweet as a perfume, vague as is a dream.”

If I were a spiritualist, I might imagine that mamma's spirit is always with me, taking care of me and watching over my welfare. Only there are things that happen altogether outside the realms of the spirits. For instance, when I was a little girl at boarding-school near Paris, during papa's absence in America, the cholera broke out in the city, and made its appearance at our school in its most virulent form. And, when I took it, Madame Lesage, the principal, was about to send me away to a hospital, when an elderly lady made her appearance suddenly, carried me off to her beautiful home, and nursed me night and day till I was perfectly well. I

shall never forget all that she did for me, and how, when I was at the worst, she watched over me without ever leaving me for a single minute. And I never learned who she was, for, as soon as my recovery was perfected, she sent me home to my father—who had come back at once on hearing of my illness—and she would not even tell me her name. When I asked papa as to who she could possibly be, he said: “Dear child, she evidently wishes to remain unknown. Ask nothing more about her, but never forget her, and let your thoughts of her mingle always with your prayers.”

And, the other day, when I took a fancy to that beautiful string of pearls that had once belonged to the Empress Eugénie, and was childish enough to shed a few tears when papa said he could not afford to purchase for me such a costly ornament, what a wonderful thing happened! For, when I awoke the next morning, the pearls lay on my pillow in a lovely case of pale-blue velvet. And it was not papa that had put them there, for he was as much surprised on hearing of them as I was when I first saw them. Then, too, I am always finding beautiful new dresses in my wardrobe—a pink crape, embroidered with silver butterflies, or a white gauze, trimmed with Valenciennes lace, or something else equally elegant. I declare, I must have had a fairy godmother. But it seems to me as if my dear dead mother must have something to do with this delightful mystery, and I always feel like saying, at every new manifestation of its influence, Thank you, mamma!

I wonder why it is that I think so constantly about my mother, for she died long before I was old enough to remember really anything about her. I do not even know if I resemble her at all. There is no picture of her in existence, so far as I know, and papa does not like to have me talk to him about her. He must have loved her very dearly, to be so unwilling now even to mention or hear her name, and never to have married again in all these years. Perhaps the reason that she is so constantly in my mind just now is simple enough. For I am going to be married, and I think that every young girl

needs the presence and the love of a mother at such a time more than ever before.

Everybody tells me that I am about to make a very grand match. I am engaged to the Duke de Liancourt-Lussac, the chief of one of the noblest families in France. I do not think that I am exactly what may be called in love with him—I have been brought up too much like a French girl for that. But I like him very, very much, and I look forward with so great pleasure to the restoration of the old Chateau de Lussac, which is fast falling into ruins, and which is to be rebuilt with part of my dowry. It was a fortified castle in the reign of Philip Augustus, and is one of the few old chateaux of France that escaped destruction during the First Revolution. The duke is a great deal older than I am, and is a tall grand-looking gentleman with very stately manners. After our wedding, we are to go to England, to pay our respects to the Count and Countess de Paris, whom the duke considers to be his lawful king and queen. And then we are to take a trip to the United States. I have never visited my father's native land in all my life, and I shall enjoy going there as a duchess. For, from all that I hear concerning America and American society, they have quite a weakness over there for titled ladies and gentlemen. The duke—he wants me to call him Henri, but I cannot bring myself to accost so grand and elderly a personage by his first name—has given me a very curious old brooch in yellow pearls as a wedding-gift. It is very ugly and very old-fashioned, and, of course, I shall never wear it; but he says that it was given to one of his ancestors by Mary, Queen of Scots, and so I prize it very highly.

It was the Baroness de Menars who arranged my marriage. All the Americans in Paris know the Baroness de Menars, or at least they have heard about her. She is one of the Smiths of Smithville in the State of New York. It appears that the Smiths of Smithville are very great people indeed, and are not to be confounded with any other Smiths, either in England or the United States. And she married the Baron de Menars ever so long ago—when she was quite young, in fact. She is a very old lady now, and is very big and imposing-looking, particularly when she is in full ball-dress, and wears a dress cut low in the neck, and with very short sleeves. Charlie Cresson once described her as the butcher's shop, after meeting her at a party, for he declared he had never seen such a display of undressed flesh outside of the Central Markets. But she is a dear good soul, in spite

of all that, and she always takes such an interest in finding titled husbands for her young countrywomen who have fortunes. I am certain that I never should have met the Duke de Liancourt-Lussac, had it not been for her good offices.

The contract is to be signed to-morrow evening, and the wedding in the church will take place a week later. Papa has given me such a pretty dress for the contract-soirée—a pale-blue silk, embroidered with little pink rosebuds. I have not ordered my wedding-dress yet, but I have made up my mind to white satin, made with a very long train, and trimmed with fringes of orange-blossoms. But I wonder where my fairy godmother can be at this momentous time. I have gotten so used to pleasant surprises, that I feel quite lost when I have not had one for several weeks, as is the occasion just now. After all, I am very foolish. Of course, it is papa who makes me these beautiful presents, and I am a silly girl to think that there is any mystery about them, except what he chooses to cast around them to make me enjoy his gifts the more.

April 12th. What a strange scene I have passed through! I feel quite dazed and awestricken by what has occurred. But I must write it all down, else I can never convince myself that it really happened.

My contract-soirée promised to be very brilliant. There was any number of titled people present—half the Faubourg St. Germain, in fact. The duke was resplendent, and wore all his foreign orders, and looked wonderfully well. I am sure no one would ever have imagined that he was three years older than papa. My dress was a great success, and one of the Orleans princes had promised to act as a witness at my marriage. So everything was going on delightfully, and the contract had just been spread out on the table for our signatures, when there was a ring at the door-bell, and a bustle in the antechamber, and two persons, a lady and a gentleman, walked into the room. The first was not in evening-dress. She was all in black, and had a veil of heavy Spanish lace thrown over her bonnet, and pinned closely over her face, hiding her features almost entirely. Her companion was tall and fine-looking, with very white hair and snow-white mustache, and having an air of great elegance and distinction. More than one of the guests greeted him, as he passed through the rooms, by the name of Monsieur de Lasenne. His companion walked straight up to the table and looked at the contract.

"Not yet signed, I see," she remarked.
 "Then I am in time."

She turned and faced my father with a dignified and yet determined air, and I could see her eyes shining under the thick tissue of her veil.

"Mr. Armytage, I grieve to be compelled to interrupt your entertainment for a little time, and to call you and Miss Armytage away from your guests. I must, however, beg for a private conversation of a few minutes with you both."

I heard papa say to her in a low tone: "I can hardly consider this intrusion as pardonable, madame. Cannot you come to my office to-morrow, to settle your affairs at leisure?"

"To-morrow will be too late," she responded, in the same low tone. "I should have hindered matters from going as far as they have done, had I not been detained by professional business for months past in Russia. Will you grant me the private interview that I desire, or shall I tell my story publicly and in a loud voice to all your guests? For it must and shall be told. Before Miss Armytage becomes the wife of the Duke de Liancourt-Lussac, it is necessary that she should know who her bridegroom really is."

"Everyone in Paris knows of the high lineage and irreproachable life of the duke."

"Will you summon him to join our conference? I have nothing to assert concerning him that I am unwilling that he should hear."

"I was about to propose that condition to you, as the only one on which I would consent to listen," responded my father, hotly. "I cannot endure to hear the gentleman I have accepted as a son-in-law defamed behind his back."

Monsieur de Lasenne here interposed for the first time. Laying his hand lightly on my father's shoulder, he said in soft and courteous tones:

"There is no question of defamation, my dear sir. Only a plain brief veracious statement which I have consented to make at the request of my good friend here."

"Well, let it be brief at least," said my father, as he opened the door of my own little boudoir, which had not been thrown open for the soirée, and motioned to our unwelcome guests to enter, while he went in search of the duke. He returned in a few moments, looking much perplexed.

"I cannot find him—he has left the house, I understand."

"He could not endure the sight of me, I think," said M. de Lasenne, dryly. "It makes no difference—my story can be told as well without his presence. As to your guests—"

"I have given orders for the supper-rooms to be thrown open, and have requested Madame de Menars to act as hostess for the moment. You can speak, sir, without interruption."

Thus adjured, M. de Lasenne began his narrative:

"Briefly, then, what I have to say is as follows: In the year 1845, I was the director of the Royal Opera at Paris. There came to call on me, one day, in my managerial room, a very old gentleman, who requested the renewal of the privilege of a free and reserved seat, accorded at all the performances at that house by King Charles X, to the Knights of the Order of the Holy Ghost. He, the Duke de Liancourt-Lussac, one of the last survivors of the old nobility, was a member of the Order. I laid his petition before the Minister of Fine Arts, who presented it to King Louis Philippe. That monarch, ever willing to maintain the traditional privileges of the aristocracy, especially when granted by one of the later Bourbon Kings of France, assented unhesitatingly to the request.

"From that time forward, the Duke de Liancourt-Lussac was a constant attendant at the Opera. He had never married; but, in default of a son to watch over his movements, he was, by reason of his great age and his infirmities, always accompanied to the theatre by a young Swiss valet, named Henri Neftzer, who, after settling his master in his orchestra-chair, would retire to a place in the upper gallery. The duke came quite often to call on me in my managerial room, to press on me the claims of a young protégé of his, who had just composed a grand opera in five acts, so I became very well acquainted with him, and also with the aspect of his constant attendant, the Swiss valet. Early in the year 1847, I read in the papers, with sincere regret, a notice of the old duke's death.

"A few weeks later, I was waited upon by a young man, in whom I had no difficulty in recognizing Henri Neftzer. 'Monsieur Lasenne,' he said, with much importance, 'you see in me the adopted son and heir of the Duke de Liancourt-Lussac, and the present incumbent of that time-honored title. I have come to request of you, that you should accord to me the reserved seat in the opera house, so long occupied by my lamented patron and adopted father, a privilege that should, I think, descend to me with his property and his title.' 'My good sir,' I made answer, 'the opera-seat was granted, not to the Duke de Liancourt-Lussac, but to the Knight of the Order of the Holy Ghost. Consequently, it was not hereditary, and, even if your adoption

would hold water in the French law-courts—which I very much doubt—you would have no right to it.” He tried to argue the point with me, but I was not to be shaken in my determination, and he finally gave the matter up. Since then, I have never wholly lost sight of him. I meet him occasionally in society, but I do not think that his right to the title he has assumed can be proved in any way. At all events, he is not the descendant of a proud line of peers—he is an ex-valet, the son of a man and woman who keep a very disreputable drinking-shop in Berne, and he is strongly suspected of having stolen the papers and jewels of his late employer, and to have concocted the story of his adoption by the duke, backing it up by the production of forged documents. The family of the de Liancourt-Lussacs is totally extinct, the late duke having been the last survivor of his race, so that there is no one that is specially interested in proving this man to be an impostor. Now, Mr. Armytage, I have told my story. It remains, therefore, with you and your daughter to take such steps in the matter as may seem best to you both. If Miss Armytage persists in marrying this so-called duke, she will at least do so with her eyes open.”

“The marriage shall never take place with my consent,” cried my father.

“Stop—let me ask one question,” said the veiled lady, eagerly. Then she turned to me and said in a gentle but anxious tone: “Do you care for this man, my child?”

By this time, I was crying bitterly, and I felt woefully distressed and mortified; yet, through it all, I was conscious of a vague sense of gladness at being set free from an alliance in which my affections had held so small a place, and in which pride and a love of grandeur had usurped the position of any more tender sentiment. I felt heartily ashamed of the whole affair, and I could only sob out in answer to that kind question: “No, indeed—I hope I may never see him again.”

“All is well, then,” she said, with a thrill of infinite relief in her tones. “Now, Mr. Armytage, we will take our departure. I doubt if the Duke de Liancourt-Lussac will ever trouble you any more.”

My father moved forward to open the door for the departure of M. de Lasenne and his companion. But, just at that moment, something in the gait or gestures of the veiled lady awoke some dormant memory in my breast, and there rose before me the image of my kind untiring nurse and faithful friend of the cholera season. I hurried forward and caught her in my arms.

“Wait—do wait!” I cried, breathlessly. “It seems to me that I know you—that I remember you as my benefactress, who saved me when I was stricken down by the cholera. Oh, yes, it is you—you cannot deny it! Why will you not let me know you, and thank you, and love you as I should do with my whole heart? But who are you, madame—you who seem to be always watching over me like a guardian angel?”

She paused, and I could feel the strong erect form quivering in my embrace as though stricken by some strong emotion. Then she turned up the edge of the veil where it covered her mouth, and kissed me tenderly, once, twice, and thrice.

“Good-bye, dear,” she said, very softly. “Do not seek to know me or to learn my name. Only, of this you may rest assured—so long as I live, no harm that I can avert will ever happen to you.”

And then she departed, followed by M. de Lasenne. I went with father into the drawing-rooms. They were empty and deserted. All our guests were gone. And on the table still lay, unfolded at full length, the useless contract. This my father took up and tore to pieces, saying as he did so: “Little one, this is the last time that I will ever have a marriage arranged for you in the European fashion. If you are ever to find a husband, you must select one for yourself, like a true-hearted American girl—a man who sincerely loves you and whom you can love.”

I am sure that I shall ask nothing better. As I look back on my betrothal, I cannot imagine how I could have been so foolish as to consent to marry a man old enough to be my father, just because he was a duke. How glad I am now that I never fell in love with him. It was very grand and romantic, and all that, to think of being a duchess and a member of one of the oldest families in France, and of restoring the chateau of the ancient race. But a Swiss valet and an impostor! Oh, what an escape I have had!

CHAPTER V.

TWO BETROTHALS.

PHILADELPHIA, September 2d, 1876.

DEAR MADAME FROILO:

I write to the address that you last gave me, to apprise you of the approaching marriage of Louise. The distaste for matrimony, aroused in her by the unforeseen termination of her engagement to the Duke de Liancourt-Lussac, has been swept away by the fine qualities and sincere

attachment of her present betrothed. When I brought her to America, to visit the Centennial Exhibition, I had some idea that she would find her fate in this land of honest wooing and unpurchased husbands. And my presentiment has proved correct. Only it is not an American that has won her heart and hand, but a Frenchman—a young artist, named Louis Lafont, whose picture of "Peter the Great at the Grave of Richelieu" is one of the most admired contributions to the foreign Art-Department of the Centennial Exhibition. He is a most charming fellow, as handsome and intelligent as he is gifted; and he is, moreover, very honestly and sincerely in love. The family is an honorable one and of high standing, his father having been General Claude Lafont, who was killed at the battle of Sedan. I think that these names are not unknown to you. We return to Paris in a fortnight, and the marriage will take place as soon as the necessary formalities can be gone through with. Trusting that you are well, I remain

Yours very sincerely,

CHESTER ARMYTAGE.

Madame Frolo, seated before her secretary in her suite of apartments on the Quay Voltaire, meditated over this letter with a happy smile on her lips that transfigured her cold stern features into unwonted softness. "Louis Lafont!" she murmured. "Louis Lafont has won her affections, and will become her husband. Her own first cousin—my dead husband's nephew and namesake! Truly, things have shaped themselves strangely and for the best. I can read, between the lines of Mr. Armytage's cautious letter, the lively satisfaction that this marriage affords him. And I—I who must still keep in the background and do my best, unseen and unknown, to aid in the happiness and prosperity of the young people—I feel now that with this marriage, so wonderfully satisfactory in all respects, my task in life is over. I have avenged my murdered husband. I have given peace and luxury and social standing to my child. I have relinquished my post, and hereafter the European police will know nothing more of the keenest and most untiring of their political detectives. Perhaps, some day, Louise may learn to love her friend and benefactress. I think that she does so already, though she has seen me but twice, and knows me not at all. The St. Laurent arrived last night. Louise must be in Paris by this time, and—"

At this point, her meditations were suddenly interrupted. The door was thrown open, and the servant announced:

"Count Paul Vanska."

Carefully but flashily attired, with a gardenia in his buttonhole and a great imitation pearl in his crimson cravat, with a pale sodden face and small half-extinct eyes, the newcomer paused on the threshold and said:

"Good-morning."

Then, as the door was closed behind him, he came forward, saying in a tone of impudent assurance:

"Do you not recognize me, Madame Frolo?"

Slowly tearing to shreds the letter she still held, and looking him fixedly in the face as she did so, Madame Frolo made answer:

"My former servant Paul, I have no difficulty in recognizing you under your new finery and your title. Where did you get the latter, and where have you found means to pay for the former?"

"That is none of your business, Madame Frolo. I have come to talk with you on a very serious affair."

And he drew up a chair, and seated himself with an air of extreme insolence. The lady looked at him calmly, without manifesting either surprise or indignation.

"Wait a moment," she said. "It will not be necessary for you to begin your conversation by recapitulating the events of your past career. After leaving my service, you became the valet of an American gentleman, Mr. Harrison Adair, whom you accompanied to Switzerland. You went with him, one day, to make an excursion on the Sea of Ice at Chamouni. You returned to the hotel in hot haste, saying that your master had fallen into a crevasse, and requesting that help should instantly be sent to him. Guides and porters, furnished with strong ropes, went at once to the rescue; but they had no one to direct them to the spot, for you, the sole witness of the accident, had disappeared. When at last Mr. Adair was found, he had long since ceased to live, if indeed he had fallen living into the ice-fissure. There was a livid bruise on one of his temples, that could scarcely have come there through his fall. It looked suspiciously like a blow from a stick. Moreover, there was neither watch nor money found on the corpse, though the unfortunate gentleman was known to have drawn, that morning, a large sum from his banker's. Next, you turn up in St. Petersburg, married to Annette Landis, a pretty chorus-singer of the French opera-bouffe company then on a tour through Russia. She is known to own some valuable diamonds, which she is fond of displaying and of talking about. She is found dead in her bed, one morning, smothered

with one of the pillows, and her husband and her diamonds have disappeared together. You are wanted in Switzerland, my friend—you are wanted in Russia—and you are very badly wanted in Paris just now, where you are strongly suspected of having had a hand in the assassination and robbery of the woman called Leonie Vanor, on the Rue des Rosieres. Your countship is a sham and a pretense—your real titles are thief and assassin.”

“And to these I mean to add one more—it is that of your son-in-law. Oh, you may frown on me as you will, Madame Frollo. That last title shall be mine before the month is out, or I shall know the reason why.”

“A charming son-in-law you would make; but you forget that I am childless.”

“I remember that you have a daughter. I come to make a formal demand for the hand of Mademoiselle Christine Lafont, alias Miss Louise Armytage.”

“What do you mean?”

“I mean that I know all about the birth and parentage of the young lady who bears the latter name, and who has just arrived in Paris with her pretended father, to have the last preliminaries settled for her marriage with one Louis Lafont, her first cousin on her father's side. I mean that, on a certain afternoon at St. Cloud, the weather being warm, the windows open, and I, understanding English to perfection—I did not live three years in London, as a groom to an English Milord, for nothing—I overheard every word of your conversation with Mr. Chester Armytage, from my post outside on the balcony. Wait—you are going to say—who will believe you? I have here the letter written by Mr. Armytage to his American friend, declaring that he was ruined, and that his only child was dead. I slipped back into the room and took possession of it while you and he were exchanging some last words at the carriage-door. Moreover, the burn on the wrist of the little girl Christine left an indelible scar, and I can swear to it as a proof of the identity of your daughter with Miss Armytage. Now what have you to say? I think I have a strong case and good evidence.”

“What is it that you mean to do?”

“I mean to marry the girl, and live for the rest of my days in peace and comfort. If her supposed father refuse my offer, I shall go forthwith to the nearest police commissioner, and will lay before him the documents that will prove the fraudulent substitution of your child for that of Mr. and Mrs. Armytage.”

“But why marry the girl? See—I am rich

—I will pay you handsomely for that paper—Mr. Armytage's letter.”

“Not a bit of it. No, you don't, old lady. I want to be sheltered against any possible raids upon my movements by the police. As the son-in-law of the rich Chester Armytage, I can command, not only money, but a secure position. And you must help me to obtain it—you must, do you hear?”

There was a ring of menace in his tones that was not to be mistaken. Madame Frollo rose from her seat and paced the room with rapid steps, her quondam groom watching all her movements with a cynical smile. Suddenly she paused and resumed her chair, having regained all the usual icy calmness of her manner.

“I have thought of a better plan than that,” she said. “Marry me.”

“You, Madame Frollo—you? And for what reason? What good would that do me? A fair young bride are you, truly, to offer as a substitute for your lovely daughter.”

“Listen,” she continued, unheeding the sneering mockery of his tone. “As you can imagine, I am willing to make any sacrifice to ensure the happiness and prosperity of my daughter. A union with me will get you completely out of her way, and will answer your purposes in every respect better than a marriage with her.”

“Prove that, if you can.”

“I can and will. In the first place, I am far more wealthy than Miss Armytage. I can prove to you by irrefutable evidence that, while her dowry amounts to two hundred thousand dollars, my fortune is fully five times as much. I offer you a settlement of the income of four hundred thousand dollars, the principal to revert to Miss Armytage at your death. I promise you full and complete amnesty for all your past offenses against the law. And, for the possession of the paper that you took from the writing-table of Mr. Armytage, I promise you the sum of fifty thousand dollars, payable on our wedding-day, which will be that on which Miss Armytage marries Louis Lafont. Is it a bargain?”

“Madame Frollo, your eloquence is irresistible as well as all-convincing. I accept your offer—that is, if you are sure of being able to guard your betrothed from the wicked machinations of the police.”

“You forget the position that I lately held in the ranks of that organization. Possibly, you are unaware of the extent of my power. But, if you trifle with me in any way, or strive to carry out your threats with regard to Miss Armytage, you shall speedily learn something

respecting it. Once my daughter's future were wrecked, I should have no reason to stay my hand or to spare you. Now, leave me. Stop—your address. I must communicate with you respecting the settlements and the date of our wedding."

Obviously uneasy as to the intentions of his terrible betrothed, the so-called count laid his card on the table, and slipped out of the room. Madame Frollo cast a glance of contempt after his retreating figure.

"And to think that such a shallow scoundrel as that thought to get the better of me. Wait a little, my friend Paul. The game is not yet played out—we shall see which one of us it is that holds the winning cards."

CHAPTER VI.

TWO MARRIAGES.

A PERFECT day, early in November—one of those few lovely autumn days when summer seems to have returned to earth to send through a mist of parting tears one last long glance. The American colony in Paris still talks of the marriage which took place that morning at the American Church on the Rue Bayard—that of Miss Armytage to the painter, Louis Lafont.

Meantime, in a suite of apartments opposite to the church, preparations were going forward for a sumptuous lunch, intended for another newly married pair, Madame Frollo and Paul Vanska, who had just been wedded by the Mayor of that quarter of the city. That functionary had looked with some surprise on the ill-assorted couple that had come to ask for his ministrations, the woman pale, severe, and elderly, with no attempt at bridal elegance about her plain costume of black cashmere, and the man, so many years her junior, with narrow shifting eyes and pallid complexion, and that indescribable imprint of vice which is unmistakable as it is ineffaceable, legible on his unprepossessing countenance. The brief ceremony was speedily ended, and then the husband and wife took their way to the rooms in the Rue Bayard, where the wedding-breakfast, by the care of the latter, had already been set forth in grand array. It was a very silent repast. The hired waiters came and went, and set dainty viands in order, and poured out costly wines, but there was little conversation.

When the waiters withdrew, Paul, more than half intoxicated, took out a packet of papers from his pocket and began looking them over.

"Deed of settlement," he muttered. "Check for fifty thousand dollars—oh, here it is, the famous letter. If I were not a fine sort of a

fellow, after all, I would not give it to you, Madame Sidonie. It would be a good thing to blackmail old Chester Armytage with."

Madame Frollo apparently paid no attention to his words. She took the bottle of liqueur from its little waiter—for, contrary to custom, only one bottle had been served—and she poured out a glassful for Paul, and one for herself. A faint odor of bitter almonds stole through the room. He caught up his glass and looked leeringly at her across the table.

"I shall keep the letter, dear wife—dear Sidonie—I have got the money and the deed of settlement, and it will be of use to me for keeping you in order. Here's to your good health, and to our conjugal happiness."

He tossed off the contents of the glass. With one hoarse cry, he fell back in his chair, dying—then sank to the floor, a corpse.

"So my little stock of prussic acid has lost none of its power," murmured Madame Frollo, as she looked curiously at the prostrate figure. "I have taken the place of justice—I have anticipated the guillotine. The murderer of Harrison Adair, and of Annette Landis, and of Leonie Vanor has not gone unpunished."

She bent over the dead man, and drew from the breast-pocket of his coat the packet of papers. These she proceeded to scan, and she cast them, one by one, into the wood-fire that was blazing on the hearth. Over the letter written by Mr. Armytage, she lingered for a few moments, then she threw that, too, in the fire, and looked on till it was consumed.

"All is safe now," she said to herself. "No one lives that knows of the identity of Christine Lafont with Louise Armytage. Denise Lamarque was shot as a petroleum-thrower during the Commune. Madame Laurent died during the siege of Paris. And there lies the last and worst of our foes. The letter, the check, the deed of settlement—all are ashes."

She went to the window and threw it open. From the church opposite, came the clash of joyous bells. The stern hard features softened as she listened.

"The bells—Louise's wedding-bells—they sound to ring me to my rest. Her happiness is secured. I have given her wealth and gladness. She goes from hence to a life of prosperity and joy and mutual love. As for me, my task is ended. What were the words with which Chester Armytage closed his letter? 'To where beyond these voices there is peace.' I go thither—to where beyond these voices there is peace."

And she stretched out her hand for the unemptied glass.